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# STATISTICAL SUMMARY

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS, U. S. D. A.

SS-17

MARCH 31, 1944

## FARMERS PLAN LARGE ACREAGE THIS YEAR

Every year in early March an inquiry is made of farmers' planting intentions with respect to the major crops. Reports this March were received from 68,000 farmers in all parts of the country. The principal acreage increases, this year over last, as indicated by these reports, are: spring wheat 15 percent, oats 8 percent, sorghums 3 percent, tobacco 17 percent. The principal decreases in intended acreage are: barley 13 percent, flaxseed 31 percent, potatoes 7 percent, dry edible beans 7 percent, dry field peas 7 percent, cowpeas 19 percent, peanuts 10 percent. Acreages indicated to be about unchanged from last year are: rice, sweet-potatoes, soybeans, hay, sugarbeets. No report is made on cotton.

In general, these reports indicate an intent to build up feed supplies; they likewise suggest some shifts to cope with individual labor and machinery problems. Assuming same acreage of cotton as last year, the planting intention reports suggest a total acreage of main crops this year of 374 million acres, compared with 361 million last year, ten year average of 354 million and peak of 375 million in 1932.

## PROPOSE TO RAISE MORE FEED

The acreage planned for the important feed grains and sorghums - the raw materials for meat, milk and eggs - shows an increase of 4 million acres or 2.3 percent over the acreage planted last year. Chief increases are 2.5 percent for corn, 3 percent for sorghums, 8 percent for oats, these being partially offset by a 13 percent decrease in barley. Total acreage which farmers plan for those 4 crops is nearly 7 percent above the 10 year average and larger than any recent year - but would not be large in relation to livestock now on hand.

Some of these acreage intentions do not come up to the Government goals set. In case of corn the goal is 100-1/4 million acres, the indicated planting 99-1/2 million. Barley goal 17.4 million acres, indication 15 million. On the other hand, oats goal is 39.5 million acres while indicated sowing is 46.1 million acres. In general, the feed grain acreages planned should take care of needs, provided the weather is favorable. All crop outcome depends on the weather.

## MORE WHEAT GOING INTO GROUND

Nearly 15 percent increase in spring wheat acreage is planned, according to the reports from farmers. This added to the 25 percent increase of winter wheat sown last fall, would bring the acreage of all wheat just about back up to average. Last year 17.3 million acres were sown to spring wheat; indicated for this spring 19.8 million acres, of this 2.3 million Durum and 17.5 million other spring wheat.

## SOME CUTS IN ACREAGE

Planting intentions showing substantial decreases of such crops as potatoes, peanuts, dry beans and peas - and flaxseed - presumably reflect unfavorable conditions encountered in growing or selling. Potato acreage cut is indicated at 7.3 percent; largest reductions in late states; probably prompted by shortage of help and difficulties with last year's bumper crop. Peanut reduction indicated about 10 percent; cut heaviest in Southwest; reflects last year's unfavorable conditions. Dry bean prospective acreage of 7.5 percent; cut is primarily in West where previous increase proved disappointing. Cut of 7 percent in dry edible peas is chiefly in Washington and Idaho where some acreage is being shifted back into grain or fallow. Cut of nearly a third in flax reflects unfavorable returns and difficulties of handling.

## DAIRY PRODUCTION NOT QUITE HOLDING ITS OWN

Butter production in January was about 14 percent less than in same month last year; evaporated milk was down likewise 5 percent and American cheese down 3 percent. Output of other cheese, however, was up 13 percent and dried whole milk production also increased.

Cold storage holdings of butter dropped 47 million

pounds during January and February, amounting to 107 million pounds on March 1. Latter figure was 95 million pounds larger than a year previous and more than 3-1/2 times as large as 1935-39 average that date. This larger stock of butter in storage this spring will help the 1944 supply situation, for it is expected that creamery butter output this year will fall about 65 million pounds below last year. WFA stocks of butter (74-1/2 million pounds on March 1) will all be delivered to war agencies during next few months.

Number of milk cows and heifers on farms January 1 was up 2 percent over year

PARITY PRICES FOR FARM PRODUCTS AND ACTUAL PRICES RECEIVED

COMMODITY AND UNIT	ACTUAL PRICE		PARITY PRICE
	FEB. 15 1944	MAR. 15 1944	MAR. 15 1944
Wheat, bu. . . . . dol.	1.46	1.46	1.51
Corn, bu. . . . . dol.	1.13	1.14	1.10
Oats, bu. . . . . dol.	.78	.79	.682
Cotton, lb. . . . . ct.	19.93	19.97	21.20
Potatoes, bu. . . . . dol.	1.39	1.37	1.23
Hogs, 100 lb. . . . . dol.	12.90	13.10	12.40
Beef cattle, 100 lb. . . . dol.	11.80	12.00	9.27
Veal calves, 100 lb. . . . dol.	13.10	13.30	11.50
Lambs, 100 lb. . . . . dol.	13.20	13.40	10.10
Butterfat, lb. . . . . ct.	50.9	51.1	145.7
Milk, wholesale, 100 lb. . dol.	3.33	3.27	2.70
Chickens, live, lb. . . . ct.	23.7	23.8	19.5
Eggs, doz. . . . . ct.	31.9	30.1	130.2

<sup>1</sup>Adjusted for seasonal variation.



previous. With heifers on hand cow numbers could be increased quite a bit this year, but it is probable that fewer heifer calves will be saved this year, in view of feed cost of raising heifers now relative to value of cows, - a factor which could affect milk production in future.

January milk production (8,634 million pounds) was about 2 percent less than in January 1943.

#### MORE EGGS THAN CASES

There are about 5 percent more laying hens on farms than in the early part of last year. Egg production in January and February was 14 percent above a year ago, this being greatly helped by mild weather (hens are very sensitive to weather). This big increase tapered off in March, but it is expected that egg output will run above 1943 until well into the third quarter of the year.

Part of the current increase in eggs is being absorbed by the dried egg industry, part is going into storage. But there is a tight situation both in storage space and in egg cases, which may hamper distribution at times and result in temporary local gluts and shortages.

#### FARM LAND VALUES GOING UP

Farm real estate values in the United States rose 15 percent in the year ending March 1, 1944. The index of values stood at 114 on March 1, (the 1912-14 average representing 100). This index rose 9 percent during the last 4 months.

The advance in values has been more than one-third in the last 3 years - an increase somewhat greater than in the 3 year period 1916-19, during the other war. For the country as a whole farm land values are now 38 percent above the level immediately preceding this war; this similarity to the 1919 situation is striking, in that year values were 40 percent above the level preceding World War I. Land values have increased 70 percent in Kentucky, 60 percent or more in South Carolina, Indiana, Tennessee and Colorado, and 50 percent or more in 8 other States. During the past year alone, increases of 20 percent occurred in North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska.

Despite the rapid rate of increase now, however, the actual level of values is still far below the 1920 inflated peak. The present index of land values in Iowa is 101, compared with 213 in 1920; in Minnesota it is 110 compared with 213 in 1920; Kansas 96 compared with 151; Ohio 111 compared with 159; Indiana 112 compared with 161; South Dakota 57 compared with 181; for the 5 East North Central States 110 compared with 161; the 7 West North

Central States 88 compared with 184 in 1920; (the base or 100 being 1912-14).

#### FEWER HIRED MEN

On March 1, 1944 this country's farms had the smallest number of workers ever recorded on same date, 8,562,000 total. This was 168,000 fewer than were working last March and was about 4 percent fewer than in March 1940. The decrease this spring has been due partly to bad weather which reduces field work, but still more to war. The number of hired workers on farms was only 1,627,000, compared with 1,727,000 a year previous. The number of hired workers now on farms is nearly a million less than 20 years ago - a fact which probably reflects some displacement by improved technique, however, as well as present war conditions.

The figures show how fully the farmer must now rely upon his family to get the work done. Family workers, numbering 6,935,000 March 1, do not show much change from last year, as contrasted with that 6 percent drop in hired workers. Also, farm operators are working about an hour longer per day now than in March 1940; (hired men are still working about the same length day).

#### FOOD PRICES DOWN A LITTLE

Cost of a city family's typical basket of foods declined nearly 1 percent from \$440 in January to \$436 in February; latter lowest retail cost in a year. What the farmer got for an equivalent basket declined from \$256 in January to \$254 in February.

The farmer's share of the consumer's food dollar in February stood unchanged at 58 cents, where it had been since August 1943 except for a figure of 59 cents reached in December.

#### FARM INCOME LARGER

Total income from farm products sold during January, including Government payments, \$1,614 million, compared with \$1,361 million in January 1943. Government payments in January \$69 million, compared with \$11 million previous January.

For the entire year 1943, total income was \$19,678 million, which included \$669 million Government payments. Comparable figure for 1942 was \$16,063 million, which included \$697 million Government payments.

For more detailed information, write the Division of Economic Information, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C., or telephone Republic 4142-Branch 4407.

#### CURRENT INDEXES FOR AGRICULTURE

INDEX NUMBERS	BASE PERIOD	MARCH 1944
Prices received by farmers . . .	1910-14 = 100	196
Prices paid by farmers, interest and taxes . . . . .	1910-14 = 100	171
Parity ratio . . . . .	1910-14 = 100	115
Wholesale prices of food . . .	1910-14 = 100	162
Retail prices of food . . .	1910-14 = 100	<sup>1</sup> 174
Farm wage rates . . . . .	1910-14 = 100	<sup>1</sup> 275
Weekly factory earnings . . .	1910-14 = 100	<sup>2</sup> 404
RATIOS	LONG-TIME MARCH-AVERAGE	MARCH 1944
Hog-corn ratio, U. S. . . .	12.5	11.5
Butterfat-feed ratio, U. S. . .	24.6	24.8
Milk-feed ratio, U. S. . . .	1.22	1.40
Egg-feed ratio, U. S. . . .	14.5	13.2
PRODUCTION COMPARISONS	JAN.-FEB. 1943	JAN.-FEB. 1944
Milk, (Bil. lb.) . . . . .	17.1	17.2
Eggs, (Bil.) . . . . .	8.4	9.8
Beef, (Dr. wt., mil. lb.) . . .	944	1,125
Lamb & Mutton (Dr. wt., mil. lb.) .	135	146
Pork & Lard (Mil. lb.) . . .	1,865	2,849

<sup>1</sup>February figure.

<sup>2</sup>Factory pay roll per employed worker adjusted for seasonal variation. December figure.